

**CLAIMS**

What is claimed is:

- 1        1. A method for facilitating image retrieval, comprising the steps of:
  - 2            querying a user as to at least one attribute of an image the user wishes to
  - 3            retrieve;
  - 4            receiving user responses; and
  - 5            presenting at least one image to the user based upon the user response.
- 1        2. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of querying a user comprises
  - 2            posing a series of questions to the user and wherein the step of receiving the user
  - 3            response comprises receiving separate responses to each posed question.
- 1        3. The method of claim 2, wherein at least one of the successive questions
  - 2            depends upon the user response given to a previous question.
- 1        4. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of eliminating
  - 2            potential image matches in response to the received response.
- 1        5. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of prompting the
  - 2            user to identify at least one image attribute.

1           6.     The method of claim 5, further comprising the step of storing an  
2     attribute association as image metadata in response to a user response to the  
3     prompting of the user.

1           7.     The method of claim 6, wherein the user response to the prompting  
2     comprises direct user selection of at least one presented image.

1           8.     The method of claim 6, wherein the user response to the prompting  
2     comprises user identification of at least one image attribute in at least one presented  
3     image.

1           9.     The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of analyzing  
2     images for a recognizable image attribute.

1           10.    The method of claim 9, further comprising the step of storing attribute  
2     associations as image metadata based upon the analyzing of the images.

1           11.    An image retrieval system, comprising:  
2         means for querying a user as to attributes of an image the user wishes to  
3     retrieve;  
4         means for receiving user responses; and  
5         means for presenting images to the user based upon the user responses.

1           12. The system of claim 11, further comprising means for prompting the  
2 user to identify image attributes.

1           13. The system of claim 12, further comprising means for storing an  
2 attribute association as image metadata in response to a user response to the  
3 prompting of the user.

1           14. The system of claim 11, further comprising means for analyzing  
2 images for a recognizable image attribute.

1           15. The system of claim 14, further comprising means for storing attribute  
2 associations as image metadata based upon the analyzing of the images.

1           16. A computer program stored on a computer-readable medium,  
2 comprising:

3           logic configured to generate questions for a user that are designed to elicit  
4 responses as to attributes of an image the user wishes to retrieve;  
5           logic configured to receive user responses; and  
6           logic configured to determine which images may satisfy the user's retrieval  
7           wishes.

1           17. The program of claim 16, further comprising logic configured to  
2 prompt the user to identify image attributes.

1        18. The program of claim 17, further comprising logic configured to store  
2        an attribute association as image metadata in response to a user response to the  
3        prompting of the user.

1           19. The program of claim 16, further comprising logic configured to  
2 analyze images for a recognizable image attribute.

1            20. The program of claim 19, further comprising logic configured to store  
2 attribute associations as image metadata based upon the analyzing of the images.